

3rd World Conference on Learning, Teaching and Educational Leadership (WCLTA-2012)

Leadership styles of school principals in Lebanon: Multiple case study

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Abstract

This study was set to explore the leadership styles among school principals as measured by the Leadership Orientations Questionnaire (LOQ) developed by Bolman and Deal (1991). The LOQ has two forms: one is self-rated by principals, and the other is addressed to school teachers to rate their principals on two dimensions: behaviour and leadership. This study is divided into two parts. The subjects involved in part one of the study were 8 school principals and 158 school teachers drawn from four schools of which three were private fee-paying in Mount-Lebanon and one public school situated in Beirut, while the subjects involved in part two of the study were 2 school principals and 40 school teachers from two different schools.

The study used the LOQ and a structured interview to gather data on the leadership styles of school principals. Pilot study results showed that this kind of research was comparable to Bolman and Deal's (1991) study and useful to gain understanding of the leadership style of school principals as received by both the principals themselves and school teachers.

Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were conducted. Main results showed that the principals rating was the most as human resource frame. As to teacher ratings of the principals in relation to leadership frames, the principals were rated the highest on structural frame in Section I and Section II. Moreover, the results of part two were similar to those of part one of the study.

The study concluded with recommendations addressed to school principals, teachers, education policymakers, and researchers interested in furthering the understanding of leadership styles in educational contexts in Lebanon. Such styles have clear implications on how school affairs are internally managed.

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Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Ferhan Odabaşı

Keywords: Leadership; leadership styles; structural; human resource; political; symbolic.

1. Background of the study

Few empirical studies have actually been conducted on leadership styles in schools in Lebanon. However, we found few national reports and studies that dealt with educational issues in Lebanon. Among these educational issues were high drop-out rates, particularly in grade 9, shortage of school inspectors (80 inspectors for 30,000 employees in the educational institutions), and shortage of qualified teachers (Bashshur, 1999). Regarding this later, analysis of raw data obtained from the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) for the school year 2005-2006 shows that about 46% of school teachers are holders of the Lebanese Baccalaureate Part II and below. Moreover, the distribution of teachers according to age by sector shows that the age over the 41-year-old category is the most numerically distributed in public schools. This signifies that the education these teachers received decades ago may be obsolete compared to evolving modern educational philosophies and related styles of pedagogy; hence, the educational background of these teachers may not render itself to answering emerging

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needs in the classroom environment; particularly in elementary cycles, which represent a main stage for the early cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development of children.

More importantly is that these teachers are supervised by school principals who do not have degrees in school management and administration. The conditions for appointing school principals in public schools are not being applied as is the case that principals should take and pass a course in educational administration offered at the Lebanese University before their appointment goes into effect as stipulated in Law 320 dated 5/4/2001. In private schools, very little is known as to how school principals are appointed and on which criteria.

2. Purpose of the study

To begin with, leadership styles of principals in schools are a matter of public concern. Leadership is an act of having influence on the activities of an organized group in its attempts to set and achieve its goals (Stodgill, 1997). Thus, there is a need to provide data on leadership that might be helpful to set standards for appointing qualified principals and there is also a need to improve the standards of school principals in Lebanon.

2.1 The objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are: (1) To examine leadership styles of school principals as measured by Bolman and Deal (1991) after adapting it to the Lebanese context; (2) to compare differences in leadership styles among schools in Lebanon in general and by sector in particular; and (3) to provide recommendations for improving performance of leadership in the schools.

2.2 The research questions of the study

The research questions of the study are: (1) What are the leadership styles of school principals in Lebanon as measured by Bolman and Deal?; (2) are there differences in leadership styles among schools in Lebanon in general and by sector in particular?; and (3) what recommendations can be offered to future research and approaches in enhancing leadership styles of school principals in schools in Lebanon?

3. Literature of the study

Leadership styles are approaches used by various leaders to guide people. They are used to get various plans and tasks accomplished successfully. They vary according to the situation, leader, or the task to be accomplished. Although there are numerous organizational theories, to Bolman and Deal (1991), Four-Frame-Model of Leadership is well-suited for this study because of its prevalent use in educational research; particularly, research focused on higher education settings. Educational leaders such as school principals must work within the organizational structure of a school board, a superintendent, and building teachers. Bolman and Deal's (1991) categorize the leaders' views and actions into four frames concerning their leadership styles. *The structural frame* emphasizes rationality, efficiency, structure, and policies. *The human resource frame* focuses on the interaction between individual and organizational needs. *The political frame* deals with conflict among different groups and interests for scarce resources. And *the symbolic frame* pays diligent attention to myth, stories, ceremony, ritual, meaning, and other symbolic forms (Bolman & Deal, 1991). According to Bolman and Deal, these styles impact the productivity of subordinates.

In a review of other theories, Leithwood and Duke (1999) suggested that the following six categories dominated educational leadership: instructional leadership, moral leadership, transformational leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, and contingency leadership styles. Bass (1961) unlike Burns (1978) suggested that transformational and transactional leadership were complementary.

It is worth mentioning that from all the studies we did and all the theories we read about, it is very important to do a research about the Lebanese studies of leadership since the study will be carried in Lebanese schools. Available studies on leadership in schools in Lebanon take the form of policy papers rather than published research. According to vision document of the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies (LAES) and the National Strategic Project for Education in Lebanon (2008), public schools are administered by principals whose majority are non-specialists in school administration. In addition, there is a limited authority given to the principal to lead and administer. Moreover, the conditions and terms of appointment which require a university degree in educational administration are not implemented together with a persistent lack of adherence to the minimum conditions specified in the laws that direct the appointment of principals.

4. Research tools of the study

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. As for the quantitative part, four types of data analysis were used. These were: (a) marginal; (b) independent t-test; (c) One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA); (d) correlation. As for the qualitative part, interviews were conducted with teachers and principals of schools in Lebanon.

5. Findings of the study

The study was done in two parts. The first part was conducted in 2009 for a master's dissertation that was limited to 8 principals and 158 teachers from four schools in Lebanon. The teachers framed their principals mostly as structural. In the four schools, the study was done had similar results. Teachers consider their principals to be strict, aware of details, and fair in distributing responsibilities. A high significance was shown in the principals rating themselves as human resource even though they did not neglect the fact that a principal should know what to do.

As for the second part of the study that is conducted in 2012 limited to 2 principals and 40 teachers from 2 different schools, the results were similar to those of the first part of the study. Teachers still consider their principals to be structural and the principals still frame themselves as human resource leaders. Thus, this correlation enhances the reliability of the study in general (see Table below).

Table: Cronbach alpha of the first study compared with the second study

Frames (Behavior)	Study 1	Study 2
Structural	.56	.57
Human Resource	.72	.77
Political	.59	.63
Symbolic	.72	.75

As a conclusion, results in both parts showed that qualitative and quantitative results complemented each other and were not quantitatively through marginal, independent t-test, ANOVA, and correlation.

6. Recommendations of the study

Hence, we believe that leaders have to be creative and teachers should be more trained. Leaders who lack creativity and willingness to improve and change don't make good school principals. In addition, leaders should not use one type of framing. They should be involved in the four frames of leadership. If not, they are untrained. Thus, we recommend: first, principals should be encouraged and trained to use all the four frames; the structural, the political, the human resource, and the symbolic as well. Also, leaders should learn the difference between each leadership style and know how to apply the suitable frame in the correct time and place. Second, in-service training, development programs, workshops, and seminars may be prepared in order to improve the leadership qualities of the administrators.

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